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ABSTRACT

This report concentrates on the problems associated with the negative image of the historical, social, and cultural backgrounds of Polish immigrants to the United States. It provides a perspective on the problems this immigrant group encountered in establishing and maintaining its cultural identity. Specific problems with negative stereotyping, discriminatory attitudes, bias in employment, and poor self-image are discussed. Factors contributing to the negative stereotyping such as "Polish jokes" and other forms of prejudice are also discussed. Suggestions are made for rectifying this "negative ethnocentrism." Reference is made to psychological studies which indicate that bicultural programs foster positive self-image. Specific cultural approaches suggested include a gain in political influence and the exposure of ethnic Polish and other minorities to Polish foods, music, and literature. (EB)

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# IN QUEST OF A CULTURAL IDENTITY: AN INQUIRY FOR THE POLISH COMMUNITY

by

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# CHAPTER I: PHILOSOPHICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

## 1. Introduction and Subject Group

It would be virtually impossible for a researcher to find a political state in the so-called western tradition with an all-embracing, inclusive cultural structure common to all of its inhabitants. Instead dominances or preponderances of recognizable cultural characteristics seem to emerge as degrees of national identity. In this vein, it was unfortunate that prior to the recent upheavels regarding ethnic identification, immigrant groups struggled to shed their distinctive characteristics and blend with the host society in the United States. The pressure discarding of their own culture in favor of Anglo-ethnic conformity, according to the sociologist Milton Gordon, constituted "the most prevalent ideology of assimilationist goals."[1] The subsequent displacement of this ideology by the one of cultural pluralism resulted in the theoretical premise that national groups within the larger nation should be preserved as ethnic enclaves.[2] However, this premise realistically failed to materialize on an equitable basis for various groups, from theory to actual practical application.[3]

One of these most neglected groups and recipients of federally or state-sponsored cultural programs in the United States has been the Polish minority. Consequently, this inquiry concentrates on the problems associated with the need for a Polish bicultural program, primarily for secondary-school age children. My attention was drawn to the need for such a program after participating in a conference of Polish historians, linguists and sociologists. Following discussions and correspondence with professionals at universities and institutes, I proceded to collect data from historical source materials

and statistical studies in related fields, dealing with problems which are subsequently described. Information concerning social structural analysis is largely derived from doctoral studies and monographs produced here and abroad. General population statistics were provided for the most part from native and foreign official government publications.

One of the more outstanding features which followed the compilation and analysis of materials was the definite lack of substantial systematic research on a community and national level in this country. Conversely, a large number of comparative studies were conducted in Poland. Because of the specific nature of already defined variable and population in these studies, the reliability of interpretation is virtually confined to that small statistical group of the most recent Polish arrivals. Before proceding with the contention of need for a cultural program, we briefly turn to the problems involved in identifying the subject group of study.

Sharp distinctions are made by a number of sociologists and social historians, in defining the Polish minority, which is commonly referred to in this and other countries outside of Poland as "Polonia." For example, Stefan Włoszewski attempted to distinguish between the "sociological group" of Polish-Americans which consciously identifies with the cultural community and the so-called "statistical group" of descendant Polish-Americans.[4] Problems arising from differentiating Polish Americans, Polish-Americans and Poles in America compound the problem of determining the statistical nature of the subject population on both community and national levels. Needless to say, numbers concerning association membership and demographic data are frequently questionable, due to difficulties

in obtaining and interpreting sources for categorization purposes.[5] However, for want of more precise data and differentiation, we are left no other wide-spread alternatives of reliance, and must confine the definition of our general statistical subject to available numbers, albeit with awareness and caution.

We find that in 1969, the Census Bureau cited the number of persons of Polish origin in the U. S. at 4,021,000. In 1974, an estimate conducted under the auspices of the Academy of Arts and Sciences in Warsaw, placed the number of Poles and Polish Americans in the United States at 6,500,000, the largest number outside of Poland.[6] Major Polish concentrations in geographic areas were studied by Professor Therezita Polzin through the use of three indices. These included the number of Parishes (Missalette Orders), radio stations and publications. Her findings of the largest concentrations in the Northeast and North Central states and in urban areas of 250,000 or more were subsequently corroborated in a report by the Census Bureau. Population studies conducted by Warsaw and Washington agree that Chicago leads the U. S. with the foremost concentration of Poles and Polish Americans, followed by Detroit, including Hamtramk, then Buffalo and New York.[7] Given this general demographic and geographic background, we briefly turn to some historical and sociological antecedents before approaching more specific studies with a view toward establishing more definite cultural needs.

## 2. Historical and Sociological Survey

The first contact between Poland and the New World is alleged to have occured before Columbus set sail. Accordingly, a certain John Scolvus, or Jan z Kolna (Jan of Kolna) was said to have reached the coast of Labrador,

and sailed the Delaware River in 1476.[8] Commissioned by King Christian I of Denmark, Scolvus reportedly died on the return trip and the discovery consequently failed to attain prominence. A Polish explorer who sailed with Columbus in 1492, was said to have been the first European slain by American Indians.[9] At any rate, history records more accurately the arrival of the first Polish immigrants to Jamestown, Virginia on October 1, 1608. The seventy settlers who arrived at this English colony began glass, tar and soap industries. We find, however, at this early date that cultural differences handicapped the Poles to the point where they were denied the right to vote. In a rate instance, missing in forthcoming centuries, they launched a successful collective protest by closing down the vital industries.[10] The important but subtle relationship between the cultivation of political power and the maintenance of cultural prerogatives is shown in the records of the London-based Virginia Company. We find under the entry date of July 21, 1619 concerning company business that:

> Upon some dispute of the Polonians resident in Virginia, it was now agreed (notwithstanding any former order to the contrary) that they shalbe enfranchized and made as free as any inhabitant there whatsoever: and because their skill in making pitch and tarre and sope-ashes shall not dye with them, it is agreed that some young men shalbe put unto them to learn their skill and knowledge therein for the benefit of the Country hereafter.[11]

The Indian Wars of successive decades and replacement technology and industry devastated the dwindling Polish community and consequently relegated it to a position of political and cultural obscurity, and eventually, physical extinction.[12] Although Poles settled in other colonies under the control of the English, Dutch, they never established a lasting community.[13] Similarly, the second of several distinct periods of immigration, from 1776-1854, failed to materialize in any permanent cultural foothold or settlement although this country benefited from the exploits of such personalities as Taddeusz Koscziuszko and Kaziemierz Pułaski.[14] At the onset of the American Revolution, the Polish nobleman, Paul Mostowski, unsuccessfully petitioned the Continental Congress to establish a colony in either Florida, Virginia or in the Carolinas. It is quite doubtful as to whether Mostowski would have had any large following from Poland toward the materialization of the plan. Undergoing the upheavals of partition, the Poles in the motherland (ojczyzna) were engaged in wars of national liberation. The resulting slaughter definitely contributed to a distinct lack of overpopulation. Likewise, the momentary lack of religious strife in Poland and the geographic distance seperating it from the United States resulted in only a trickle of immigrants.[15]

In contrast to this early era, the next period of immigration which began in 1854 and ended with the onset of World War II was largely brought about by economic factors. The years of partition between three occupying powers resulted in stagnation and a bare subsistence level per capita income, resembling that of Ireland following the potato blight. The era of Niepodległosc (Independence) improved the economic plight of the masses

negligibly as Poland struggles with the problems wrought of its ressurection. Understandably, the United States held an attraction especially for the Polish peasant with his ill lot. The social historian William Seabrook contended that the Polish peasant intended primarily to eventually buy agricultural land in America. Some time later, he would then return to Poland and buy land there with profits earned in America.[16] This premise was a substantial factor in motivating the eight hundred poverty-stricken settlers who established the first permanent Polish settlement at Panna Maria (Virgin Mary) Texas.[17] Cultural life revolved around the first established church named for the Immaculate Conception, and a second named for Czestochowa, both under the leadership of Father Leopold Moczygemba.[18] The Texas settlement spearheaded another at Polonia, Wisconsin in 1856. These were followed by a permanent community in Parisville, Michigan.[19]

In spite of these communities, a certain potential for cultural activities occured only with the waves of immigrants who arrived during the 1880's and through the first decade of the twentieth century. Experiencing the suppression of Russification and the kulturkampf, the predominantly peasant arrivals' immediate cultural needs were confined to restoring their churches, preserving their village customs and establishing some form of mutual assistance.[20] Their immediate concerns were directed to their survival and that of their families as they toiled in factories, labor centers and slaughter-houses. The immediate conditions and subsequent development of life style culturally clashed with that of newcomers representing the last and most recent period of immigration, namely Poles who

arrived in the United States at the onset of the Second World War. A cultural chasm, as we will subsequently see, existed between these newcomers and their predecessor toilers who were attracted by the magnetic attraction of a fantasial bountiful America for all.[21] Before approaching this and other problems, we briefly turn to some social conditions affecting the cultural development of earlier arrivals.

### 3. Social Considerations and Cultural Background

With the inception of the first permanent settlement at Panna Maria, the Catholic Church materialized as the mainstay of Polish culture in the United States. More than one sociologist has drawn strong parallels between the Polish parish and the principle of the commune. The Church became a unifying cultural factor by means of concentrating and reorganizing the primary community.[22] It provided a means of national expression for the immigrants, without fear of retribution from either Kaiser or Tsar. Historians who tried to bridge the chasm between Church and Nationalism, such as Joseph Swastek, maintained that Roman Catholicism constituted the primary formative influence upon the evolution of the Polish American heritage. "It shaped the lives of its followers," claimed Swastek,

> ...giving existence a meaning and a purpose, and evoked a profound, though largely emotional, attachment on the part of the common folk.. so strong was this attachment to Catholicism that in the minds of many peasant folk the terms 'Pole' and 'Catholic' were synonymously interchageable.[23]

An ethnically Polish as well as Roman Catholic Church established a system of parochial schools under the auspices of the Polish Roman Catholic Union. The Union stressed the marriage of Catholocism to Polish civiliza-

tion toward the preservation of Narod Polski (The Polish Nation).[24] The maintenance of the Church as purveyor of cultural functions through the nineteen twenties was corroborated by a number of in-depth analyses.

In his classic study of the Polish New York community, Theodore Abel found that the Church proved to be a "crystallizer" and stabilizer. Parochial activities in the Twenties included cultural associations for with adults and youngsters.[25] Similarly, Daniels found that the Church organized virtually every activity of Polish-American community life in Hopeville, Mass. (1920).[26] A rapid development of Polish parochial schools occured at the turn of the century. James Sanders found in his study of Catholic education in Chicago that since 1900, the Poles had the largest enrollment in ethnic parochial schools of all minority groups.[27] Some 511 Polish parochial schools in America claimed an enrollment of 219,711 students in the nineteen-twenties. Another 110,148 children attended public schools during this period.[28] In consideration of these existing numbers, first appearances dictate the maintenance and growth of a cultural base. However, such was not to be the case. The antithesis of the Polish Roman Catholic Union, the Polish National Alliance (which broke away from its parent Catholic body), promoted Polish culture, but ultimately weakened the role of the parish by promoting secular associations.[29]

By the 1930's, a significant decline was noted by Jozef Chalasinski in Chicago's Polish parishes as cultural and social leadership centers of the community.[30] Viable participation in parish activities continued to a large extent in rural areas, probably due to the lack of formal ethnic associations and activities.[31] A decreasing number of parochial schools

paralleled the diminishing authority and leadership of the Polish parishes. Some 587 Polish parochial elementary and 90 high schools existed in the United States during the years 1946-1947. By 1950, the total number of parochial schools dropped to 540. We find in a survey conducted in 1971, only 310 of these schools functioning, distributed over 24 states. Eight of these schools excluded Polish altogether. Polish reading was conducted in only 42 schools or 13.5% of the total number. Only 20.4% of the schools taught any form of Polish history or culture.[32] The Polish parochial school, then, appeared to decline as a viable conductor of language and culture.

However, another counteracting force to the deterioration of cultural maintenance developed with the rise of Polish national and cultural associations. An increasing web of nationalistically-oriented fraternal associations were found by Helena Znaniecki-Lopata to increase in membership through mid-twentieth century. Based on data from historical documents, questionnaires and participant observation, the Znaniecki-Lopata study concluded that ethnic voluntary associations contributed toward preserving the original heritage and introducing new cultural patterns.[33] The study indicated that:

> ...the existing voluntary associations have been able to perform necessary functions for the first-generation immigrants, even for those who came to the United States at an early age...It also shows that some second-generation Polish Americans are drawn into groups which have added new functions or...for...promoting education and appreciation of Polish-American culture...Furthermore, some associations have maintained political, cultural, and personal contacts with Poles in Poland.[34]

Unfortunately, the study failed to take into account that the subjects could have belonged to more than one organization under consideration, leading to inflation of the true statistical results. This was shown in a study conducted by Peter Ostafin in Detroit, where Poles maintained more than single membership and were counted as such. Analyzing the membership of Detroit's Poles in local associations, Ostafin concluded that the organizations were losing their characteristics as cultural transmitters, leading to the disintegration of the Polish community. Moreover, a study by Edward Puacz showed that national membership in organizations fell in the 5-10% range.[35] Heterogeneity of organizations due to differences in approaches and values characterize the central cores of these more often than not, polar-opposite combinations. As a result, the local communities, also termed Polonias, fall victim to a greater degree of loose cohesiveness, such as indicated with the Ostafin study, thus straining the already tenuous connections with one another as heritage serves political interests. The ramifications of these factors will be further explored in relation to problems of ethnic identity and cultural transmission in the following chapter.

Upon reflection, we can summarize that the Roman Catholic Church served as the cultural fountainhead for arriving Polish immigrants through the beginning decades of the twentieth century. Cultural and language maintenance were perhaps easier if not more desirable for the first settlers at Jamestown than their successors. This was due to the cultivation of a rudimentary political and economic power as shown with the need for glass, tar and soap industries in the English colony. In comparison, subsequent peasant waves, for the most part, had little to offer in terms of skilled labor or craftsmanship. Shock, disappointment, and

fear left the new arrovals with little or no alternatives but to rely on the local parishes. For a time, parochial schools served as a viable transmitter of culture mixed with religion. The rise of secular associations led for the most part to a decline of the parish and parochial school and loose cultural cohesiveness within and among communities. We turn now to more specific problems associated with establishing cultural need.

## CHAPTER II: ESTABLISHING CULTURAL NEED

### 1. Problems of Ethnic Identification

A number of researchers have pointed to the persistence of an inferiority complex in second and even third generations of Polish Americans. Charles Emmons characterized this as "negative ethnocentrism," whereby Polish Americans maintained basic loyalty and orientation to the ethnic group, but incorporated negative stereotypes. Negative stereotyping of Polish Americans in Chicago were found by Emmons to lead to unfavorable self image and alienation. Data for the study gathered from sample survey, participant observation and questionnaire sources led Emmons to conclude that Poles in Chicago had the lowest ethnic group prestige rank outside of Appalachia.[36] An earlier study of the South Chicago area, previously cited, conducted by Chalasinski concluded that the subjects were conditioned to and antipated derogatory treatment.[37] Similar attitudes were found by William Lloyd Warner and Leo Srole to exist in Yankee City.[38] Eugene Obidinski's study of the Polish community in Buffalo showed that middle and upper class respondents alleged that bias existed in public employment.[39] In another study, conducted in the Roman Catholic School System, Robert F. Hill found that students of Polish descent were

"labeled with a negative stereotype," and "encouraged to follow a vocational rather than academic career--with little regard or sensitivity to individual interests and potentialities."[40] As a consequence of discrimination, real and imagined, a growing number of Polish Americans sought to shed their ancestral identity.

The nation-wide Polzin study conducted in 1971 showed that only 50% of the respondents identified themselves with Polish ethnicity. Another study conducted by Obidinski, this one comparing assimilation factors in Buffalo and Panna Maria showed an identification with Polish ancestry by 70% of the subjects in both localities.[41] Less than 50% by comparison, of adults and only 35% of students studied by Donald Pienkos in Milwaukee considered themselves of Polish ancestry.[42] As if to reinforce these results, the 1969 report of the Bureau of the Census stated that 4.2 million Americans indicated Polish ethnic origin while statistical products of community studies indicated populations of between ten to 15 million respondents.[43] The underlying tendency to avoid association with their cultural roots is largely due to the widespread adoption of the aforementioned negative stereotype by Poles and Polish Americans.

This stereotype was shown by Albert Gordon in Hawaii, where Poles were few in number, as the manifestation of a strong and inexplicable prejudice on the part of other ethnic respondents.[44] A certain continuity of this negative stereotype and resulting self image existed since the period of immigration when Poles arrived in large numbers. Historical evidence is given by Joseph Parot to support this premise and demonstrates the fear of other "more established" minorities which psychologically subordinated the Poles.[45] We find from other sources corroboration of early discrimination

against the Polish immigrants. The social historian, John Higham reported how "native" settlers during the 1870's refused to move into neighboring areas of a Polish colony in Illinois, leaving the land vacant for a long period of time.[46] During this period of time, Polish immigrants in Luzerne County, Pennsylvania experienced social ostracism as well as economic discrimination.[47] More recently, Obidinski found the persistence of hostility toward Detroit's Poles on the parts of other ethnic groups such as Irish and Germans. Polish American students were found by Arthur Wood to resent similar hostility from other ethnic students.[48] In the Polzin study, 10% of the responding parishes cited housing as a potential area of discrimination.[49]

The effects of this negative self image is no less devastating on the arriving immigrants who more often than not find their occupational status in the United States to be less than that in Poland. This was confirmed in Danuta Mostwin's study of the adjustment of Polish immigrant families to the United States, following the Second World War. The study showed a downward socio-economic mobility for the lower-middle and lower classes in the U.S. by more than 50% (of the Polish middle class), and less than a 40% upward mobility movement on the part of the remaining respondents.[50] Further comparisons between the new immigration and the resident ethnic community will be presented in the forcoming section.

2. Problems of Positive Cultural-Image Formation

Cultural image formation in a society such as ours, with all of its modern complexities, may comprise several layers which can blend and enrich the national fabric through the multiplistic kaleidoscope of differences.

Unfortunately for the Polish community, these differences tend to create rifts within its basic organic composition. Sharp differences seperate arriving Poles from established immigrants, as well as dividing the resident community. This is most readily reflected by such indicators as association or organizational affiliation. Znaniecki-Lopata concluded that:

> The formation of separate groups by the 'new emigration,' its lack of participation in existing associations, and the expressions of conflict found in Polonia are witness of this separation of interest. [51]

Obidinski's study in Buffalo showed that the working class participated less in associations than upper class respondents. Overall, upper class association which stress the literary and scientific aspects of Polish culture distinctly diverge from blue-collar associations which revolve around folk culture.[52] In contrast with these findings, Pienkos' sample group of Polish students showed only 5% membership in ethnic associations.[53] Most of the associations fail to provide substantial activities for Polish youth. We find evidence of this in Stanisaw Sypek's study of the Polish community in Boston.[54] In addition, others such as Ketayun Gould noted internal strife within cultural and benefit associations.[55]

Differences in culture and heritage which mark divisions between the recent immigrants and established Polish ethnic groups are also reflected in association data. The aforementioned Mostwin study indicated the tendency of 65% of upper and middle-class respondents, surveyed from Polish immigrant families following the Second World War, to participate in at least one

available association. Nonetheless, the data showed a week correlation between membership and ethnic identification.[56] The low correlation may have resulted to a large degree from the unmeasured criteria of differences in political and social values. As suggested with the Znaniecki-Lopata study, statistical data concerning membership and active participation in Polish ethnic associations during the past decades has been largely conflicting and confusing.[57] However, some recent surveys tend to show that the new arrivals find both white and blue-collar "Polish-American groups not quite congenial and tend to form their own clubs, reflecting the culture of the inter-war period." The immigrants who came to the United States following Gomulka's accession to power in 1956, were observed to virtually avoid Polish American associations.[58] As shown with the Obidinski study, undoubtedly socio-economic differences increased the cultural chasm between immigrant generations. It would appear then that cultural interpretation and aspiration are tied to occupational attainment. Considering the totalitarian and monolithic directional channeling of culture conducted by the present regime in Poland, arriving immigrants are subject to more disappointment than cultural satisfaction. Only recently has some dissidence in Poland crept into print, albeit in moderation:

> The point is not to bring about a complete unification of participation in culture at a higher level. That would be both unrealistic and dangerous as were many Utopian plans in the past to effect a rigid regulation of all form of social life. The point is to replace cultural gaps and distances due to the variables of social status and social position by a differentiation resulting from the variety of individual trusts, needs and aspirations.[59]

Nonetheless, the establishement of a highly sophisticated filtration system of cultural aspects concerning Polish life makes the implementation of the above view academic. Differences in structural class governed by ideology add to the cultural shock. It is not surprising then, that only 4% of Mostwin's sample of transplanted families achieved the "final stage" by "direct passing" to American identity.[60] The above-cited studies indicated cultural differences and preferences by class within the already established ethnic community. A lack of concurrence regarding respective interpretations and pursuits by the participants to a discernable disintegration of the ethnic Polish cultural fabric.[61] This disintegration becomes more readily observable in the light of additional studies. One of the most important indicators of cultural transmission showing this decline is the degree of retention and use of language.

The ethnic language provides one pursuit of cultural identification and expression. A study of bilingual programs in the United States, published in 1970, listed Polish as the fourth most widely spoken language. The overriding reliance of the study, however, upon undifferentiated governmental statistics raise doubts regarding the reliable correlations of ethnicity and language.[62] In contrast, we find a rapid decline in the use of Polish in a number of community studies with the exception of Hamtramk. Here on evaluation of school census records for 1927 and 1945 showed that approximately 50% of the families with fathers born in Poland, tenaciously clung to the native language at home, while the remaining families spoke English and Polish.[63] On the other hand, Warner and Srole noted in their sample of immigrant Poles and native-

born offspring in Yankee City, a distinct linguistic shift from the first to second generations. They further observed the tendency of the "rising third generation" to reject the native language."[64] Similarly, Stanley Mackun's study of the use of Polish at home by generation and residential area in Detroit showed a sharp language decline. Using historical documents and interviews, Mackun drew a random sample of 228 families divided into three areas: solid (53), transitional (114), and fringe (61). The Polish language dropped in usage in all three areas, by as much as 59% for second and third generations.[65]

Another study conducted by Chester Jurczak of five ethnic Polish islands in cities located in the western part of the Middle Atlantic States showed a significant decline in language for second and third generation daughters. The study compared second and third generation mothers, who already appreciably showed a statistical loss in Polish comprehension and usage, with their daughters, through interviews and questionnaires. Third generation daughters averaged 0-10% in the use of Polish at home. I should note that 73% of some 556 questionnaires were returned with only 66% used for the study.[66] Hill found that only 1 out of 122 of his student - respondents spoke Polish, although the remainder reported understanding the language.[67] Mostwin noted that only some 36% of her subjects communicated with their children exclusively in the Polish language.[68] The above data corresponded to Franciszek Lyra's report, published in Poland on nation-wide ethnic language maintenance among Polish Americans. Through the use of questionnaires

(245 returned out of 600 mailed to centers, professionals and students,) he computed a decline of 55% in Polish language comprehension by third generation participants.[69] It would appear, then that the counter-acting forces to the deterioration of language maintenance held their own until the onset of the third generation. The decline of Polish culture is further registered in the dwindling numbers of Polish-language publications.[70] Between the years 1863-1950, some six hundred periodicals were published in approximately one hundred periodicals were published in approximately one hundred communities. In 1940, only thirty publications of the total number remained. By the beginning of 1970, there were only twenty-seven of these in existence.[71]

The decline represented in these transmitted appeared to be directly connected to feelings of inferiority and the desire to shed a seemingly negative Polish cultural image. This visably materialized itself in the changing of Polish-sounding last names, to less conspicuous one. Upon examining 2513 petitions for name changes, Stanley J. Zagraniczny found at least thirteen different reasons on the parts of these ethnic Polish applicants.[72] The late Stephen P. Mizwa contended that name-changing was part of a general process of Americanization which made the Polish immigrant feel at home. He recognized, however, the association of negative self image and name-changing and issued a warning to Polonia.[73] According to the Znaniecki-Lopata study, Poles appear to change their names more frequently than any other ethnic group in the United States.[74] This tendency was also observed by Stanley Mageira and others.

All of the above cited studies tend to accentuate cultural problems which imply great difficulties, then, for the Polish American community in the formation of a positive ethnic image. Under the stigma of a negative stereotype, the tendency of resident generations to shed cultural characteristics appears to have become more widespread.[75] We will see in the following section some of the more identifiable problems, associated with this negative ethnocentrism.

3. Prejudice and the Negative Stereotype

Certain outstanding aspects of the overall negative stereotype of Polish Americans merit identification and exploration. One of the more outstanding areas contributing to the formation of negative stereotypes has been the so-called Polish joke. Some insight regarding the formulation of these jokes is given in the following passage:

> Ridicule and contempt are the ultimate weapons of persecution. They attack not external characteristics, but reputation and self respect; they attempt to destroy not just the freedom of movement of a man, but his very face. One mocks what one is powerless to destroy. Portions of the middle class, still struggling with some elements of lower class insecurity, adopted the less obviously crude and more intangible weapons of derision and ridicule by insinuation. One of the principal motivations for such treatment might have been the fact that persons of Polish background, regardless of their length of residence in America, were moving ahead economically, educationally and socially at a pace that was probably interpreted as a threat to the insecure.[76]

Here again, the inability of the Polish community to effectively curb this indignity and other aspects of defamation is a consequence of the lack of large-scale political influence. On a local level, publications like Perspectives succeeded in persuading the Lewis Buckle Company from advertising the offensive Polish marksmanship buckle, and

Hallmark agreed to remove the Do-Do Pulaski puzzle from circulation.[77] Recent marketable Polish jokes have appeared in a host of new forms. These include a flat bowling ball, a drinking mug with the handle inside, a computer that features a pencil with an electric cord attached to it, and a blank Polish dictionary. A degrading undershirt with the caption, "It's Exciting Being Married To A Pollack" depicts a grotesque charicature of a man picking his nose.[78] The producers of these jokes, for commercial or other reasons, seem unaware and unconcerned about the psychological damage to individual Poles and Polish Americans. This was made evident when a news dispatch in Detroit published the findings of anthropologist, Paul Wrobel, regarding the negative stereotype of the local Polish community. Detroit newspapers were inundated with responses from Poles who expressed pain and sadness as well as identifying with Wrobel's findings.[79] Emmons noted in his study that the promulgation of these jokes were of great concern to members of Chicago's Polish ethnic community.[80] In addition to offensive jokes, the Pole is usually linked with specific derogatory characteristics without the camoflage of humor. Helena Szmunessowra wrote,

> Mr. John Doe will not form an opinion of Poles and their culture based on his liking or not 'The Polish Rider' in the museum, but rather on his Polish co-worker who regularly comes to the office drunk or his lady-neighbor who is seen walking around with a black eye every other day.[81]

One of the more recent associations emerged when the National Broadcasting Company telecast a program on December 6, 1975, characterizing the Poles en masse as anti-Semetic. Poles were accused of collaborating

with Nazis toward the extermination of the Jews.[82] Assistance and sacrifices made by the Poles during this controversial period went unmentioned.[83] This negative characteristic is extended to the stereotype of general racism on the part of Poles and Polish Americans. Part of this image is due to public pronouncements by specific interest groups who claim to represent Polonia. We find, for example, that Narod Polski, the Polish Roman Catholic Union newspaper proclaimed the following during the Chicago race riot of 1919:

> "For what reason are they beating Jews in Europe and Negroes in the United States?... They are beating Jews because they have earned it. Why, it was the Jews who for hundreds of years made [efforts] toward materializing the world. The Jews have cultivated usury; they lived in wealth while the Christians died of hunger. The Jews betrayed and cheated the Christians; they depraved the spirits...the same can be said about the programs of negroes which took place recently in St. Louis, Washington, and Chicago. The negroes are attacking White women and girls. The negroes have wrenched work from White hands in many cities.... The Jew is equally hungry for money as the Negro is ignorant."[84]

As early as 1909, a popular writer considered the Poles, "clannish and clash with Lithuanians and other races." Contrary to their widespread labeling as racist, Poles in several community settings were observed to cordial relationships and cooperative ventures with other ethnic groups.[85] Nevertheless, the cumulative negative image finds expression in many settings. As an example of this, a teacher related an incident that transpired when he introduced himself as Polish. He received the response, "Are you kidding?! Funny, you don't look like a Polish teacher."[86] In another instance, the publication of Irwin T. Sanders and Ewa T. Morawska's scholarly work on Polish American community life occasioned distortions and misrepresentations in an American journal which could only serve to

reinforce an already unfavorable self image. The publication, Parade-The Sunday Newspaper Magazine, expounded:

"Some Polish Americans turn their economic and political frustrations both on themselves and occasionally on some other ethnic groups, resenting the gains made by others while feeling alienated and threatened."[87]

Nor is the negative stereotype confined to the "adult" level. A recent elementary school text transmits the unfavorable image with a story called "The Silly Polish Farmers." The farmers are drawn as pigs with the names "Polka" and Dotta." The characterication trend of the story is shown by the following:"

Farmer Polka kept brown chickens. He thought they laid better eggs than spotted chickens. Farmer Dotta lived next door. He kept spotted chickens because he thought they laid better eggs than brown chickens. Polka and Dotta spent all their time arguing when it would have been better for them if they spent their time working of playing games together.[88]

In another instance, this one on the secondary level, a story entitled "sidewalks, Gunboats and Ballyhoo" depicts the character Tony Rabulski as. "the toughest boy in school, and he was also considered to be the dumbest." "He would often come to school," runs the narrative,

> ...wearing a black shirt, because a black shirt didn't show the dirt the way the other shirts did, and his parents couldn't afford to buy him many shirts...The boys and girls who weren't Pollacks had fun together that Pollacks couldn't have. Being a Pollack was like being called a sonofabitch. It was a name. When you were called a name like this, you were looked at as a different kind of kid from one who wasn't called names.[89]

Countless other examples can be given to demonstrate the many instances of conscious and unconsious negative stereotyping of the Polish community. What, then, becomes of the development of a positive self-image for future generations? As shown in this chapter, a persistence of an

inferiority complex continued through second and third generations of Polish Americans. There is little wonder as to reasons for these feelings, in view of the above cited studies which demonstrated a negative stereotype in the minds of non-Polish ethnic Americans. The overriding question remains as to what can be done to rectify the situation?

## CHAPTER III: TOWARD A PROGRAM OF CULTURE AND RESOLUTION

### 1. Meeting Needs

We can safely begin this section by stating that on the basis of evidence presented, a definite need exists for a program to reverse the trend of what Emmons called negative ethnocentrism. The contention of a bi-cultural program that would foster a positive self image finds support as well in several psychological studies. To name one, James Coleman's study of educational achievement suggests that an individual's self concept is the most singular item toward achievement.[90] According to Eric Erikson, the process of identity is "located in the core of the individual and yet in the core of his communal culture."[91] We have seen in the beginning sections of this report that the parochial s schools and associations are questionable transmitters of Polish culture in quantity and quality. The associations have been stigmatized and influenced by some political persuasion, more often than not. In contrast with its early depiction as purveyor of the Polish cultural fabric, the remaining parochial schools have been charged with stifling "initiative and creative interest in this area."[92] In the quest, then, for viable alternatives, certain prerequisites are suggested toward providing solutions. The first of these involves the necessity of more systematic community studies, especially comparative ones. The boundaries of Polish ethnicity are still ill-defined and merit a similar systematic approach to clearly identify the statistical population. However, it lies beyond the scope and aim of this exploratory presentation to suggest

specific methodological approaches.

A second suggested prerequisite is the enforcement of what is in effect national law for all minorities or for none. The national Bilingual Education Act of 1968 defined one of its objectives as the instillation:

> ...in the students (of) a positive self-image by stressing the significance and contribution of their language and culture to a multi-cultural society.[93]

Unfortunately, the application of this premise appeared relegated to only a few of the minorities within the nation. The activation of a program that will realize the equitable application of this stated objective requires funds. A preliminary comparative study, alone, would cost $100,000 and upwards.[94] Few states, cities and institutions have shown independent initiative or inclination toward financing such projects, leaving the federal government as the major potential benefactor.

This brings to the forefront a third suggested contention - that of the cultivation of political power by the Polish community. It would appear that the acquistition of cultural programs (and funds needed for their realization) followed the successful establishment of political movements by such minorities as Puerto Ricans, Negroes and Chicanos. Realistically, power politics achieved certain gains for these minorities were educational reason failed. In contrast to these organized political movements, Polish Americans are relatively unorganized as a power group.

and relatively apathetic. During the latter part of the nineteenth, the Polish National Alliance appeared to encourage voting according to party affiliation rather than adhering to the concept of "swoj swojego."[95] One of Victor Greene's conclusions was that Polish immigrants were more interested "in bread than power" at the turn of the century.[96] Kusielewicz noted that leadership in the Polish American community, "still rests largely with the clergy." Unlike other groups, Polish clergymen according to Kusielewicz avoid the forefront of political activities. As a result,

> "...the Polish American community is, therefore, leaderless. It does have the Polish American Congress, and there are divisions that are doing meaningful work...The primary limitation of the Congress, however, is that in so many of its divisions it is the captive captive of recent political emigres from Poland...thereby excluding the bulk of the Polish American community...We are therefore faced with a leadership gap that threatens the very existence of the Polish American community."[97]

The few voices on the local political scene, such as Stan Franczyk,[98] have attempted to attain greater representation of needs by exhorting the Polish-American community to formulate a "neighborhood strategy."

Nevertheless, a state of apathy appears to dominate local communities. Polish Americans were found, for example, to show little interest in Detroit politics. Obidinski's study showed that most respondents in Buffalo didn't belong to any political club.[99] Wyrtwal summarized the situation with the statement, "There is no 'Polish' party devoted to the defense or promotion of the interests of nationality."[100] We now turn to some specific cultural approaches toward rectifying the negative self image.

2. Some Specific Cultural Approches

How, indeed, should specific items, cited in previous sections, which reflect the negative stereotype image of the Polish ethnic community, be approached? If the process is cultural, then positive items relating to ethnic background should be explored. Food is an example of the means by which the culture can be transmitted. Characteristic food of the Polish culture was found by Jurczak to form a continuity from generation to generation for the majority of this respondents.[101] Characteristically Polish foods survive on a daily basis and as specialties which are served during such holidays as Easter and Christmas. With the exception of pork products and some alcoholic beverages, Polish foods remain largely unknown to ther ethnic groups. "This may be in part," says Helen Stankiewicz zand,

> "...to the fact that the restaurant business is one that Poles go into but rarely. The chief reason, probably, is that the Polish cuisine is heavy and expensive, the cooking process long and complicated, not in keeping with the modern trend to a light, low-calorie diet and simplicity in preparation."[102]

The exposure of the ethnic Polish and other minorities to music is another example of promoting positive self-image. During the prior century, singing groups maintained aspects of Polish culture through "familiar patriotic and folk songs." Patriotic anthems such as "Boże Cos' Polske," and "Jeszcze Polska Nie Zginęła," found their way to homes by means of a "lirnek" (song book") or "spiewnik" ("hymnal").[103] Polish classical forms crossed the Atlantic and were clebrated as national cultural expressions at events like the Chicago World's Fair in 1893.[104]

The advantage of flexibility exemplified by the range of music offers many opportunities. Classical music, then, represented by such composers as Chopin and Szymanowski could be cultivated along with traditional Polish folk music and dances (e.g., polka, mazurka, etc.)[105]

Polish literature presented in native and host languages is another means of instilling pride and maintaining the ethnic language. Attitudinal scales on a local and national basis can help to determine interest regarding specific authors and works. The basis for such a scale was constructed by Mary Ann MacDougall and Francelia Butler at Cracow to test the reaction of Polish students to American literature.[106] Another area for consideration is the cultivation of national and religious holidays which are indigenous to the Polish culture. The organization and promotion of these events through the mass media would help foster a positive self image and contribute to the placement of the Polish minority on an equal footing with other ethnic groups.[107] We have seen in a previous part of this report that Polish-language publications experienced a distinct numerical decline in the United States. It follows, then, that an increase in the number of publications would serve to promote the ethnic language and serve as a barometer of cultural growth. At the same time, cultural programs on a local and national scale could promote productions for the theater, radio and televisions.

The scope of this report prohibits detailed expansion and exploration associated with procedures. All of the individual problems which were associated with specific need are directly related to the major problem which was cited above, namely that of reversing the negative stereotype image. In the same vein, all of the above cited

specific approaches are integral parts of the general culture and complement each other in the quest for a positive self image. The listing is by no means complete and should serve as a framework approach, to be filled in according to variations in localities and needs.

3. Summary

With the exception of the Jamestown immigration, several centuries before, the general attitude of Polish Americans has appeared to be one of resignation. Textbooks continue to ignore the contributions of Poles while they recognized those of Blacks, Hispanics, American Indians and other minorities. It would seem that this recognition followed some upsurge, some rocking of the social structure in the United States. The change, then, must develop and flourish in substance at the grass-roots level with assistance and recognition forthcoming from other quarters. In this instance, the purpose suggested by this writer is appropriately touched upon by ideas expressed some thirty-five years ago by Walter Lippman:

> The notion that every problem can be studied without the background of tradition must condemn man to a chronic childishness. No man, no generation is capable of rediscovering all the truths men need. The men of any generation, as Bernard of Chartres put it, are like dwarfs seated on the shoulders of giants. In developing knowledge, men must collaborate with their ancestors. Otherwise, they must begin, not where their ancestors arrived, but where their ancestors began.[108]

Any great movement of social import leaves its mark, hopefully one of benefit for the entire nation. The structure of this country's national fabric has been molded and twisted in several directions by

successive waves of immigrants. Cultures clashed in vehemence and intermingled in harmony, giving rise to new generations and ideals. The Polish Americans form one thread of this fabric whose color and vector help shape the cumulative design of the country. The exclusion of this cultural thread would only diminish the fabric and tarnish its brilliance.

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